WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 MARCH 1981

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

CHAPMAN HISTORY OF COUNTY, NOW 100 YEARS OLD, VIEWS WASHTENAW THROUGH VICTORIAN SPECTACLES

A major source of early local history, C.C. Chapman and Company's *History of Washtenaw County,* is one hundred years old this year.

The plump, venerable Victorian volume (1,452 pages), completed in 1881, has been both praised and criticized.

"The information to be found in this book, both as to quality and quantity, is nothing less than astounding," Historian Louis W. Doll told the Society in 1963 in a talk in which he analyzed how the book reflected Victorian ideas and ideals.

"In spite of the enormous size of the book, it is not complete," Doll said. The book "is based to a large extent on human memory which is not infallible, and this accounts not only for some of the mistakes and contradictions but also for some of the lack of completeness."

Some things were simply forgotten, other things Victorian people thought should not go into a book. "One of the strong tenets of Victorian philosophy was that 'virtue should be encouraged and vice suppressed'." Except for some murders, there is little admission of the seamy side of life, or even of the less prosperous and less "in" citizenry.

These people, Doll said, "were intensely proud of their greatest achievement, that of converting a wilderness into a highly developed community in such a short time. That is the basic emphasis of the book."

There are approximately 1,500 biographies, mostly of heads of families. He estimated that represented about 12,500 people from a group then known as the "better classes", out of a county population of 42,000.

While these American Victorians may have had their smug and self-righteous side, they also had a sense of humor, he noted. He refers to humorous accounts of the Toledo War (pp. 76-80) which he thought worthy material for a comic opera, the Blackhawk War and real estate speculation. He also noted some examples of unconscious humor via writer's slips such as "He (Norman C. Goodale) married Appama Burnett, but death came to her release (p. 893)."

The book was harder to use until Doll and Geneva Smithe, longtime secretary, custodian and editor for the Society completed an index. The index is on file at the Michigan Historical Collections in Bentley Library here, the State Library in Lansing and in the Burton Collection at the Detroit Public Library.

TO NEW MEMBERS

Welcome and congratulations on winning our historical "What Is It" contest at the Home Show! It was great fun for all concerned.

We hope the Washtenaw County Historical Society can have much to offer you in the next year, and that we can keep your interest and support in future years. There are three more monthly programs this spring and a full schedule beginning in September. There will be an Historical tour in June and you will receive *The Impressions.*

In return, we hope you will bring the enthusiasm you showed in figuring out the contest to our meetings. The history of our county is worth preserving.

Sincerely Yours,
John C. Dann, President

LIFE ON 1800'S FARM AS HENRY FORD KNEW IT TO BE MARCH 26 TOPIC

A typical nineteenth century southeast Michigan farm will be Peter Cousins's topic at the WCHS meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, March 26, at the Salvation Army, 100 Arbana at West Huron.

He will focus on the 90 acre farm of William Ford where Henry Ford I grew up in what is now Dearborn. Cousins is curator of agricultural implements at Edison Institute, better known as Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. (The new director has changed the Dearborn historical complex back to its original name.)

Cousins will discuss both how the farm, which specialized in hay, grain and dairy, was typical and how it was unique.

AUCTION YIELDS $2,505; THANKS ALL YOU HELPERS

Thanks to many donors, buyers and workers at the auction and Home Show exhibit booth, WCHS gained $2,505.75 and 194 new members.

John and Pat Danovich, show promoters; Lloyd Braun and Jerry Helmer, auctioneers; Hazel Proctor, auction chairman, and Great Lakes Federal Savings; Tom Knight; John Dann and Clements Library; Jim Proffer; Tom Dixon; Ethelyn Morton; Brad Taylor and Dave Pollock gave special help.

Booth staff included Florence Armbruster, Pat Austin, David Braun, Ann Chamberlain, Frances Couch, Carol Freeman, Lois Foyle, Virginia Gutknecht, Mary Heald, Harold Jones, Thomas Lacy, Donna and Robert Miller, Elizabeth Nicol, Pollock, Pete and Janet Rocco, Esther Warzynski, Alice and Lawrence Ziegler.

Photo Copies Will Enrich Collection

"Photographs are among the richest and most portable parts of the past," Sam Breck told the February WCHS meeting.

He spoke about "Photographs and Their Use in History", demonstrated photocopying and copied more than 100 old photos of Washtenaw County people, places and things that audience members brought.

The copy negatives will be on file at Bentley Library as part of the WCHS collection. The originals were returned as soon as they were "shot".

"Photographs use very little space. A wonderful history of your family can be contained in something as small as a shoe box, but it's absolutely worthless if it isn't identified.

"So my first advice to you—and it's a plea—identify your photographs. Don't leave them to memory. Memories do slip. Write on the back.The best thing is with a soft pencil. Don't use flow-type pens with water-soluble ink because if the photo becomes damp, the stuff will run. Don't use ball point pens because they emboss and you can see it on the other side.

"Print legibly who the people are, where they may have been, when you think it was taken or the circumstances under which it was taken. Don't just put 'my aunt and uncle at the lake about 1936'. You may be the only one who knows who they are. Put their names down and what lake and 'about 1936'.

"Remember, photos are delicate—both black and white and color prints and slides. A lot of you are taking slides. There's no doubt about the appeal of color slides. I want to warn you however about something that is very dangerous.

"Do not put slides in those plastic pages with little pockets—within a couple of years the slides will be ruined. The pages contain some hydrochloric acid to make them flexible. That will react with the film emulsion and you'll notice a wet spot. If you see that, they've had it.

Courtesy of Nan Hodges

WASHTENAW PIONEERS
Orrin and Ann Thayer White, first settlers in Ann Arbor township in 1824.

"There are devices for storing slides where the slides do not touch the plastic. Those are usually semi-rigid. Of course the best way to store slides is in metal boxes in cool temperature, 55 degrees and 55 percent humidity (low to moderate).

"Even in the best conditions, slides as processed today will only last 20 to 25 years, while black and white will last up to 400 years. So I encourage you to take some black and white pictures and avoid flexible plastic, even the albums with plastic pages that lay over and hold prints down. In time, pictures will react with them and be destroyed. Photo corners are best.

"Photos enable us to know our ancestors with an intimacy that we cannot accomplish in the written word.

"People ask, 'What kind of photos should I take? What is valuable?' "

Breck listed the following kinds:

1) Those of objective reality that tell it "like it is" such as people working or street scenes, without any manipulation or posing.

2) Pictures that show growth and change, that lend themselves to comparing with earlier or later photographs, such as a street before a major building was built and afterwards, or your children at ages 10, 15 and 20.

3) Memorials, sites or circumstances of events that made local news—that's of course what newspapers are.

4) Characterizations—people who may be typical although anonymous, people in working environments, even if not identified. "I'm sure we have hundreds of pictures around town of Jake the Shake."

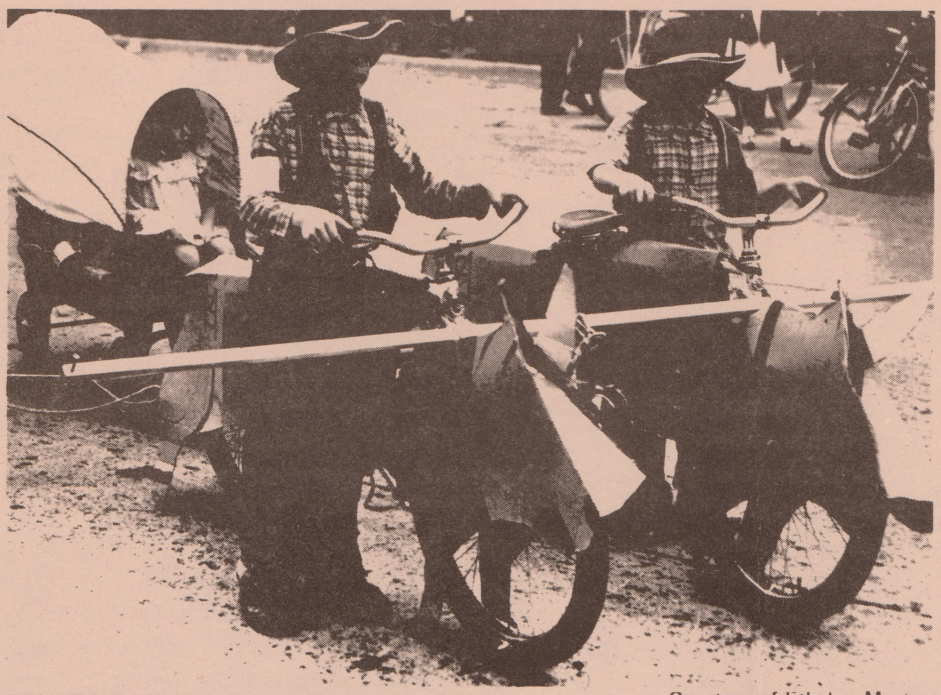
5) Evidences of local pride, legendary associations, people not necessarily prominent but who are related to local stories or folklore or who have some kind of minor notoriety such as the long time proprietor of a business standing in front of his store.

6) Persons, places or objects well-known or often cited in local literature, for most part structures, but also people and locations.

7) Any first that shows a beginning worth recording or saving and something from an early date, such as a first school, second school.

"I think it's wrong to save everything. Select the clearest and brightest scenes. Put the others in a separate box or discard. Discard out-of-focus, half-frame or those with sun glare. Of people, select the most presentable, respectable pictures plus any that show the period of his or her life in characteristic settings or activities and informal moments.

"Posed pictures have their place. A picture of Uncle Frank's graduating class is fine, but a picture of



DEXTER BICYCLE PARADE WINNERS, 1941 Courtesy of Ethelyn Morton

Disguising bikes and coaster wagon as oxen and covered wagon, the children of WCHS Corresponding Secretary Ethelyn Morton won first prize at the Dexter Railroad Centennial. That's Martha in the wagon, Hudson T.,III, and Charles F. on right. Photo by the late Eck Stanger of the Ann Arbor News.

Uncle Frank in front of his first car in which you can perhaps see the license plate and maybe a muddy road — the so-called informals — have just as great a value if not more. Look for informal and unposed as well as posed.

"Copying is basically making a picture of a picture. Acceptable copies can be made with most any type of camera, even the better Instamatics. You can copy color prints and slides as well as black and white, all resulting in a black-and-white negative and print. (Copying in color is more complicated.)

"Copying can make a print better than the original. There are ways that even a yellowed, faded picture can be enriched such as one shown from the WCHS collection of a mill that once stood on North Main Street where the Planned Parenthood office is now. Yellowing is caused by latent traces of chemicals left in improper processing."

Breck noted that while Herb Pfabe, a local photographer on the WCHS board, uses the finest equipment for copy work, resulting in a larger negative, his (Breck's) is a basic inexpensive portable unit.

It has a metal copy stand with feet, costing about $25. "To this you can fasten the camera and some lights on either side, although sunlight can be used. The picture to be copied is placed on the copy board. A thick sheet of glass is sometimes useful to hold a picture or album page flat.

"Probably the best kind of camera for portable work is the single lens reflex. When you look through the viewfinder in back you are actually looking through the lens. It is done with a system of prisms and mirrors. When you press the shutter, the mirror flies up out of the way so the light image can pass through and strike the film. When you wind the camera, the mirror comes down again.

"The reason the single lens reflex is preferred is that you have no problem aligning things perfectly because what you see is actually what you get. You are not going to cut off people's heads.

"You mount the camera in a horizontal position, facing down over the copyboard "stage". A light meter is helpful if you don't have an automatic camera. You need some source of electric power. A cable release which screws into the shutter by which you can operate the camera without actually touching it makes for steadiness."

He estimates copy equipment such as his costs about $60. "I think every historical society ought to have this kind of equipment (not necessarily the camera) for the use of its members.

"If you are going to do a lot of copying, you will save a lot by rolling your own film. Photo stores stock 100 foot rolls. With a bulk loading device for about $12 and some reusable cassettes, you can roll your own 36 exposure rolls for about 15 cents a roll."

Different types of films may be used but Breck prefers Panatomic-X "because there are ways to develop it to bring out the detail in shadow and highlight areas.

"You can also make or buy a device, a little light box, to copy slides. If you have some precious slides, it might be a good idea to make or get copies."

He angles his photoflood lights at about 45 degrees for even light. "If working with sunlight, be careful to position your work so a shadow doesn't fall across it. You can even copy things by tacking them on a door outside, setting up your camera on a tripod and snapping."

Audience members brought a variety of pictures of early residents, buildings and activities, including a good representation of early German families.

There were Orrin and Ann Thayer White, first settlers in Ann Arbor township in 1824, whose 1836 cobblestone house across from Huron High School is on the National Register of Historic Places, the Geddes house at Dixboro and East Huron Drive and the flat-roofed Olivia Hall house at 1530 Hill.

There was Reuben Kempf in 1890 on the steps of Kempf House, the Jacob Kempf farm, now Briarwood Shopping Center, and Fred

and Maria Wildt Staebler who came in 1831. There were tailors David and Gotlobb Wild, Hellners, Maiers, Nevroths, Bachs.

There was the Milan Knights of Pythias Band, 1905; paving Milan's main street, 1906; the former Geddes Powerhouse, Superior Bridge, Ann Arbor churches and the Ann Arbor High School which burned in 1904 and was replaced by the present Frieze Building.

There were pupils at Frain's Lake and Geer Schools, 1930's; World War I recruit James Mummery; a gravel cleaner on the Fiegel farm in 1920; Brauns's feeding silage to sheep, 1942; the Morton children on their first prize winning bikes at the Dexter railroad centennial in 1941, and a number of others, including an unidentified multiple room school.

GSWC TO HEAR DR. DANN

Dr. John C. Dann, director of the U-M's Clements Library, will speak on "Clues for Genealogists in American History" at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 22, at Washtenaw Community College. Frances Gardner and Barbara Snow will talk about "Planning and Taking Research Trips" at the 1 p.m. class.

APRIL SPEAKER

Gerald Linderman, U-M associate professor of history, will speak at the WCHS April meeting.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826

Keylining: Anna Thorsch

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8:00 p.m. THURSDAY MARCH 26, 1981

SALVATION ARMY

West Huron at Arbana
Ann Arbor, Michigan

H I S T O R I C A L H A P P E N I N G S

Chelsea Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. second Monday, McKune Memorial Library. Having membership drive. Researching buildings to add to historic district under preservation ordinance.

Dexter Historical Society — 8 p.m. Thursday, April 2, at museum. Jack Blanchard will show movies of Dexter's 1941 railroad centennial. Dessert following. Open to public.

Museum will not reopen for season until noon Monday, May 26, following village Memorial Day parade. Regular open hours will be 1--3 p.m. each Tuesday and second and fourth Saturdays.

A 200-plus year old grandfather clock has been given to the museum by a one-time Dexter woman in her will. Annual pioneer crafts fair 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, March 21, Dexter High School.

Manchester Historical Society — "Four Tune Tellers" will lead a singalong of old favorites at 8 p.m. Monday, March 23, at the Methodist Church.

Milan Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Hack House, 775 County Street.

Saline Historical Society — Because of Easter, April meeting postponed to 4:30 p.m. Sunday the 26th at Senior Citizens Room in City Services Building on Maple Road. Potluck dinner for members. Normally meets 2 p.m. third Sunday.

Webster Historical Society — 7:45 p.m. first Monday at Webster Church, 5484 Webster Church Road.

Ypsilanti Historical Society — 2--4 p.m. Sunday, April 12, at museum. Peter Fletcher, new member of Michigan State University Board of Regents and a local businessman whose family are long-time local residents, will talk on "An Assortment of Ancestors".

Terry Towler's collections of bottles, including many from Ypsilanti in the late 1800's, are on display until April 21 at the museum, when they will be replaced by Ernest Griffen's insulators, some of them also dating back to the 1800's. Museum hours usually 3--5 p.m. Friday--Sunday.

'WHAT IS IT?' WINNERS

Fourteen persons had perfect 20 out of 20 scores on the "What Is It?" game at the WCHS Home Show booth and 180 others had 15 or more correct. All 194 won a free one-year membership.

Perfect scorers were Larry and Peggy Grant, S.A. Harkless, Aileen Hyne, Conrad Juchartz and Don Parrish of Ann Arbor; Brenda Pollock of Canton; Richard Borton of Chelsea; Jeff Pixley of Westland; Robert Beaugrand and Van Hardesty of Whitmore Lake; and Robert Fink and Rosemary Johnson of Ypsilanti. One perfect scorer did not sign his name.

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